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The Navy Bureau of medicine and Surgery distributes Navy and Marine Corps Medical News (MEDNEWS) to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees and retired Navy and Marine Corps families.

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Contents for this week's MEDNEWS:

Headline: Video teleconferencing saves clinics funds, expands training
Headline: Air Force study suggests agent orange, diabetes link
Headline: American Red Cross establishes Child Life Program at Portsmouth
Headline: Dentist training on the table at Tokyo conference
Headline: Health promotion emphasized at the academy (Photo)
Headline: Focusing on health brings another award to Wasp (Photo)
Headline: Anthrax question and answer
Headline: TRICARE question and answer
Headline: Healthwatch: Your body may be the wrong canvas for tattoo art (Photos)

-USN-

Headline: Video teleconferencing saves clinics funds, expands training
By Cmdr. Vernon D. Morgan and Lt. James E. Romine, U.S. Naval Medical Clinics United Kingdom

LONDON - U.S. Naval Medical Clinics United Kingdom, faced with reduced travel funding but still needing to train its medical personnel, found relief in technology by merging video teleconferencing into their training plans.

After upgrading its video teleconferencing capabilities, the command experimented with monthly continuing medical education presentations by linking with Branch Medical Clinic St. Mawgan (in southwestern England) and North Audley Health Center (in the U.S. Naval Forces, Europe building, downtown London), and the command's Navy Liaison Office, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

Success of this in house project generated interest in reaching out to other military medical facilities throughout Europe. Because the command's video teleconferencing equipment is limited to four channels, the information management/information technology department coordinated with Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's IM/IT department to host continuing medical education presentations across their bridging network.

Landstuhl's video teleconferencing is capable of hosting twelve military installations simultaneously, enabling U.S. Naval Medical Clinics United Kingdom to present continuing medical education presentations to a larger group of providers.

The continuing medical education program by video teleconferencing expanded to all of Europe January 21 when Lt. Cmdr. Brian Smullen, MC, the command's psychiatrist, gave a presentation on "Oral Dependency and Abusive Behavior."

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Headline: Air Force study suggests agent orange, diabetes link
By Staff Sgt. Kathleen T. Rhem, USA, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, -- Adult-onset diabetes in Vietnam vets may be associated with exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange, a Air Force report released recently states.

The report is part of the long-running Ranch Hand Study --the Air Force investigation into the health risks associated with exposure to Agent Orange. It also included evidence that herbicide exposure is related to cardiovascular disease later in life. The study is called Ranch Hand because the original mission of spraying Agent Orange in Vietnam was called Operation Ranch Hand.

"This report includes the strongest evidence to date that exposure to Agent Orange is associated with adult-onset diabetes," said Joel Michalek, a statistician with the Air Force Research Lab at Brooks Air Force Base, Texas. Michalek is the principal investigator of the Ranch Hand Study. The latest results suggest that as dioxin levels increase, the presence and severity of adult-onset diabetes increase, he said. He also said that as dioxin levels increase, the time to onset of the disease decreases. A 47 percent increase in diabetes was seen in those veterans with the highest levels of dioxin.

"This is particularly strong evidence since dioxin is that

component of Agent Orange that has been linked to many health effects in laboratory animals," Michalek said.

Michalek said the Ranch Hand veterans experienced a 26 percent increase in heart disease, but the risk was not increased in those with the highest levels of dioxin. However, the risk of cardiovascular abnormalities, such as high blood pressure and the prevalence of prior heart attack indicated by electrocardiogram, did tend to increase with dioxin levels.

"The mixed results mean that some indicators of disease increased with exposure and others did not," he said. He was careful to point out that while these findings suggested a link between these diseases and Agent Orange exposure, they're not conclusive.

"Biological processes relating herbicide exposure with these diseases have not yet been described," Michalek said. "I'm not prepared to say that dioxin causes diabetes. People who have high dioxin levels are at a greater risk of diabetes."

The Air Force is, however, taking steps to prove cause and effect. The service is funding research at the University of California at Davis and at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Little Rock, Ark., to explain any biological relationship between dioxin and diabetes.

The Ranch Hand Study has been going on since 1978 and includes periodic examinations of about 2,300 Vietnam veterans - 1,000 who worked on Operation Ranch Hand and another 1,300 who flew missions in Vietnam but weren't associated with the operation. This latest release of information is associated with physical exams conducted in 1997.

Previous examinations and reports have suggested links between Agent Orange exposure and nine distinct diseases: chloracne, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, porphyria cutanea tarda, respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx and trachea), soft-tissue sarcoma, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy, and prostate cancer.

In addition, monetary benefits, health care and vocational rehabilitation services are provided to Vietnam veterans' offspring with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect of the spine. VA presumes that all military personnel who served in Vietnam and who have one of the listed diseases were exposed to Agent Orange, and it compensates veterans with any of these diseases. Michalek said any future decisions to compensate veterans with diabetes would be made by the VA.

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Headline: American Red Cross establishes Child Life Program at Portsmouth

By Lt. Kyra Hawn, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - The high quality care for children at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Va., has been made even better by addition of the Child Life Program.

This American Red Cross project aims to meet the non-clinical needs of children who are admitted to NMCP. Child Life also seeks to address the needs of parents and family

members who remain in the hospital with their child.

"Child Life is the missing piece of the puzzle that can make or break the inpatient experience for children and their families," said Sally Barclay, a Red Cross volunteer who is chairman of the Child Life Committee. "It encompasses all of the things that children need to thrive in an inpatient clinical environment."

Barclay, who lost her only child during a bone marrow transplant in 1991, knows first-hand the importance of a support network for kids and parents alike.

"You can't make it through an experience like this alone," said Barclay. "Sometimes just a hot shower and time to recharge can change your whole outlook on things." The Child Life Program offers parents time to regroup as well as outlets for counseling and assistance.

The hospital's Child Life Room is designed for computer activities, academic tutoring, arts and crafts, weekend movies and special holiday parties. Satellite rooms throughout the pediatrics ward offer video games, puzzles, and age appropriate toys. Special guest appearances are also made by cats, dogs and other members of NMCP's pet therapy program.

The program is growing, but is still far from meeting its volunteer and donation goals. Anyone may volunteer to assist with the Child Life Program and become an American Red Cross volunteer. Specifically, the program is in search of teachers, tutors, story tellers, artists, clowns, jugglers, singers, hairdressers, and anyone capable of offering a child-specific talent or service.

The Child Life Program wish list for equipment and toys includes mobiles, crib toys, educational toys, music tapes, kid videos, magazine subscriptions, play rugs, rocking chairs, Nintendo/Sega/Playstation systems and software, potty seats, step stools, children's furniture, and appliances for a 'home away from home' room for parents. New donations are preferred, but gently used are also accepted.

Donations and volunteer arrangements may be made through the American Red Cross Child Life Program chairman at (757) 953-4487.

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Headline: Dentist training on the table at Tokyo conference

By Bill Doughty, U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka

YOKOSUKA, Japan - Different techniques and programs that will expand the scope of dental service to patients were exhibited in Tokyo at the 48th Annual Conference of the Tri-service Dental Society of Japan.

More than 200 Navy, Army and Air Force as well as dentists from the Japanese community gathered in Tokyo recently for three days of lectures, meetings, and "table clinics."

Cmdr. Michael Marks, DC, conference coordinator, said tables with dynamic and colorful displays filled the large banquet room where dentists answered questions and presented information on cutting edge technology and clinical studies.

Marks, a prosthodontist at U. S. Naval Dental Clinic

Yokosuka, said that the meeting has a long tradition of "providing continuing education and opening lines of communication."

"Continuing education is a big focus. During activities like this we get to see different ideas, different techniques, and expand our scope of things we can deliver to the patients," said Cmdr. Joel Traylor, DC, a dental surgeon from USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63).

Traylor had a popular table clinic at the conference enjoyed by visitors and other presenters, including LT Julie Fierro, DC, a general dentist from the Atsugi Branch Dental Clinic.

Fierro said, "By coming here you're learning about different aspects of dentistry. Not only [from] the table clinics, but there are also different courses and facets of dentistry. "There are some pediatric dentistry lectures that will help me when I go back, because we don't have a pediatric dentist in Atsugi."

The conference, sponsored this year by the Navy, also strengthened the health care network in Japan and enhanced personnel dental readiness of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

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Headline: Health promotion emphasized at the academy
By Lt. Rhoda Gabel, NC, Naval Medical Clinic Annapolis

ANNAPOLIS, Md. - Providing health promotion information to midshipmen became easier in February with the opening of the health promotion office in Bancroft Hall.

It is a little office doing big things bringing health information and material close to home for the brigade of midshipmen. Midshipmen now have more convenient access to literature, videos, displays and websites with topics of health promotion and personal performance that most concern a midshipmen or any college-age student.

"Our new neighbor seems intent on making us healthy and fit", said Chief Missile Technician (SS) Donald Gemeny, Company Chief for 30th Company. "This is a convenient resource for the midshipmen and staff."

An avowed policy of the Department of the Navy is to ensure military readiness, maximize individual performance, and reduce the cost of military health through programs of physical fitness, disease prevention, and health maintenance. Health promotion information enables personnel to increase control over their health.

Positive lifestyle and behavioral changes can improve health and enhance quality of life, which for the military translates into improved operational readiness and increased retention of valuable personnel. The Health Promotion Office will help focus the Naval Academy's 2010 vision in promoting lifelong physical fitness through education. Augmented by mental and character development, graduates of the Naval Academy will set the example for Sailors and Marines in every aspect of

living.

The future of the Navy begins at the Naval Academy. The future of military health begins here as well. The paradigm shift to health promotion, wellness, health leadership and personal performance will have the Navy and its future leaders, "Fit to Fight" and "Fit for Life."

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Headline: Focusing on health brings another award to Wasp
By JO3 Kory Deur, USS Wasp (LHD 1)

USS WASP (LHD 1) AT SEA -- The Medical Department onboard USS Wasp (LHD1) is beginning to look like the Chicago Bulls during the days of Michael Jordan.

For the third consecutive year, the Medical team has won the distinguished Force Commanders Annual Wellness Unit Award, also known as the "Green H." The award is given to commands that promote and implement successful health programs for the betterment of the crew.

"It's an honor to be a part of an ongoing, successful health program," said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Wenzel, MC, Wasp's senior medical officer.

Wenzel, from Melville, New York, and his medical department oversee health issues on board the Wasp, such as food service, injury prevention, stress management, tobacco cessation use and exercise.

Nutrition education and counseling is a routine part of an individual's periodic health care. Complementing Wasp's nutrition information are healthy menus that include salads, fruits and vegetables.

"The salad bar is really good," said Seaman Marsha Scudella from Elmhurst, Ill. "There are always fresh fruits and vegetables."

During meals, crewmembers are offered low fat options. Near each item is a nutrition information card detailing portion size, calories and fat count.

Keeping its crew nutritionally healthy is not enough. Wasp safety department, with its six full-time safety personnel, has a comprehensive program to prevent crewmember injury.

Add to the wellness and safety programs a stress management course, suicide prevention classes, smoking cessation training and a comprehensive picture of crew concern begins to emerge.

"Navy life can be stressful, especially during deployment," said Wenzel. "Helping Sailors to cope with stress not only allows them to perform their job but to enjoy it as well."

With the basics in place for nutrition and a healthy lifestyle, Wasp has also added an extensive gym to ensure Sailors and Marines have an opportunity to stay physically fit.

Naval personnel achieve conditioning and strength training through free weights and aerobic conditioning. The ship's flight deck is also available, schedule permitting, for Sailors and Marines to use for running and calisthenics.

"We are integrating the health risk appraisal into 'Division in the Spotlight' inspections and Command Indoctrination so that each crewmember's health can be optimized," said Wenzel. "Likewise, the Health Care Promotion Committee continues to insure a safe and healthy working environment for safe and healthy Sailors."

With this type of medical and health program already in place, Wasp will be looking forward to winning its fourth consecutive Green "H", in the year 2001.

"We have a good chance at winning it again next year because it's a team effort, not only with medical personnel but with support from the command as well," said Wenzel.

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Headline: Anthrax question and answer

Question: Has the senior leadership of the Armed Forces received the anthrax vaccine?

Answer: Yes, the senior leadership, including the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Service Secretaries have received anthrax vaccinations. Indeed, Secretary Cohen and General Shelton recently received their sixth doses, 18 months after their first doses. Many of our senior leaders have chosen to receive the vaccination publicly with media coverage to "lead by example." However, the primary focus of the vaccination program is to ensure that people going to high-threat areas get first priority to receive the anthrax vaccine.

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Headline: TRICARE question and answer

Question: What is the function of the Nurse Advisor?

Answer: Nurse advisors are available in most regions, by phone, to provide advice and assistance that will enhance patient decision making about their health care. They are normally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can discuss treatment alternatives, symptoms, and illness prevention or can advise whether a situation warrants immediate medical attention. Any TRICARE-eligible person can use the service of the nurse advisor.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Your body may be the wrong canvas for tattoo art

By JO1 Maria Christina Mercado, Naval Hospital Pensacola

PENSACOLA, Fla. -- If the Navy wanted you to have a tattoo, they would have issued it with your sea bag.

Tattoos. They certainly weren't issued with your sea bag, but some of your shipmates probably have made that trek off base to a 'parlor' at least once in their lives.

Some young Sailors, Airmen, Soldiers or Marines see a visit to the tattoo parlor as a rite of passage. For many, a tattoo emblazoned upon their flesh is a lasting reminder of the camaraderie once shared.

However, before you exit the main gate, keep in mind there are health and professional issues you may want to be aware of before deciding whether a tattoo is right for you.

"The two most significant risks [associated with tattoos] are allergic responses to the pigments and exposure to blood-borne pathogens," said Cmdr. Alan Rolfe, MSC, head of Naval Hospital Pensacola's dermatology department.

"After the initial inflammatory reaction to the trauma of pricking the skin hundreds of times to place the tattoo pigments and dyes, other reactions can occur. Allergic reactions and foreign-body reactions to some of the pigments and dyes are not uncommon," said Rolfe.

"The sudden onset of swelling, irritation and redness in portions of the tattoo can occur weeks or years after its placement. Significant infection of tattoos is now unusual, but poor infection control by the tattoo artist and the [recipient] can lead to a risk of serious bacterial or viral infection," said Rolfe.

But along with that bad news is some good news for those seeking tattoos. They can be applied safely when you know how to select a tattoo artist.

"Make sure the tattoo artist is established," warns Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman Recruit Jason Ankney, a student assigned to the Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC) in Pensacola. The Miami native has five tattoos and he wants to have one removed.

"A scratcher is someone who works out of the kitchen or a van. He's someone who should definitely be avoided," said Chief Hospital Corpsman David C. Pearce, a 6-time tattoo recipient and head of the preventive medicine department at Branch Medical Clinic, Naval Air Station, Pensacola.

Legitimate tattoo artists follow proper infection control procedures and would never risk their reputation by failing to follow appropriate health measures, according to Pearce.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta reports the transmission risk of HIV and Hepatitis B or C exists if instruments contaminated with blood are either not sterilized or properly disinfected or are used inappropriately between clients. CDC recommends that instruments intended to penetrate the skin should be used only once, then disposed of or thoroughly cleaned and sterilized.

If you're considering a tattoo or having your body pierced, ask the establishment's staff what procedures they use to prevent the spread of HIV and other blood-borne infections, such as Hepatitis B or C.

"If they can't answer those questions or offer unsatisfactory answers, just walk away," said Pearce. "A legitimate tattoo artist will have no trouble answering your questions because his livelihood depends on doing a good job and maintaining his reputation," said Pearce.

"I just wanted to get a tattoo," said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Marvin Celestino. "I went out with all my friends and we did it," he said.

"I looked around and saw that the man was using packaged

sterile needles. I wouldn't have done it if I wasn't convinced his shop was clean," the Manasses, Va., native said.

Even after you consider the health issues, consider also the professional implications before you get that tattoo.

"An inappropriate tattoo can disqualify a Sailor for certain types of duty, such as recruiting," said Master Chief Journalist Randy Kafka, command master chief of Naval Hospital Pensacola.

There are more than a few instances of young service members getting tattoos, which they later regretted, said Kafka who has even gone with friends to tattoo parlors, but decided not to get one because it was permanent.

"There is nothing I need to have permanently tattooed on my body," he said.

Hospital Corpsman and Atlanta native April Few, who works at Naval Hospital Pensacola got a butterfly on her second trip to the tattoo parlor. "I really wanted a butterfly. No one has ever said anything bad about [the tattoo], but sometimes I still wonder if it looks all right when I'm wearing my uniform," she said.

Sailors with offensive or inappropriate tattoos have been ordered to wear long sleeves to hide the tattoos, the command master chief added. "Anybody thinking about getting a tattoo must really consider the ramifications tomorrow and 20 years from now because a tattoo is forever," said Kafka.

"The wearing or displaying of clothing, jewelry or tattoos ... depicting marijuana or any other controlled substance or advocating drug abuse is prohibited at all times on any military installation or under any circumstances, which is likely to discredit the Navy," said Master Chief Boatswain's Mate B.C. Cruse of the Navy Uniform Matters Office.

There is no other "official policy" regarding tattoos.

"Military personnel with unprofessional tattoos on the legs, ankles, or arms can be directed by their commanding officer to permanently wear long sleeve shirts" or women may be required to only wear slacks to cover the tattoo," said Cruse.

"I've heard of young Marines coming to the hospital hoping to have a tattoo removed because they're putting in for an officer program. We tell them sorry," said Kafka, "under normal situations the Navy does not remove tattoos."

"Think about it before you do it," said Celestino, "because once you do it, it can be expensive -- and painful -- to take back."

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Comments about and ideas for MEDNEWS are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, Earl W. Hicks, at email: mednews@us.med.navy.mil; Telephone 202/762-3223, (DSN) 762-3223, or fax 202/762-3224.

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